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ABSTRACT

Available world statistics, however limited, indicate a trend toward the universalization of literacy, reason for cautious optimism. Deep commitments and bold action are necessary to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000. Some important facts do not appear in statistical data, for example: (1) most literacy gains result from expansion of schooling and do not target adults; (2) Third World population explosion has increased the absolute numbers of illiterate people despite a reduced illiterate proportion of the population; (3) statistics are often based on self-report and may underestimate real numbers; (4) serious disparities in literacy occur by geographic region and age; and (5) the largest disparities occur by world region, with 98% of illiteracy occurring in the Third World. Adult literacy work is still treated as a charitable issue, not a pragmatic one. Policy initiatives have been absent or not commensurate with need. Most theory and research comes from the West. While social mobilization is needed for literacy work to succeed, it will have to be organized, not spontaneous. Many aspects of both delivery and curriculum of literacy education must be worked out. Literacy worker training and recruitment must be refined, and the role of both program and learner evaluation should be addressed. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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WORLD TRENDS AND ISSUES IN ADULT LITERACY: INTERREGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

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The main title of this paper and many of the ideas discussed here are taken from the author's recent book, World Trends and Issues in Adult Education (London, U.K.: Jessica Kingsley Publishers & Geneva, Switzerland: Unesco International Bureau of Education, 1989).

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WORLD TRENDS AND ISSUES IN ADULT LITERACY:
INTERREGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS

To make an objective statement on world trends and issues in adult literacy is, of course, impossible. A subjective statement may nonetheless be useful, especially if it invites reflection from a few others engaged in adult literacy work on the eve of the International Literacy Year, 1990. Through a pooling of perceptions, we may be able to generate some ideas to make insightful policy choices and to plan for effective action in behalf of adult literacy promotion.

Diffusion of literacy around the world

Trends. Available statistics on literacy/illiteracy, howsoever crude, indicate a clear trend towards the universalization of literacy around the world. That is reason for optimism, but with a heavy dose of caution. The world is indeed destined to be fully literate (1). However, we do need to make deep commitments and take bold actions to make the inevitable immediate -- to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000.

The statistical table below (2), in presenting a general trend in literacy diffusion around the world, fails to bring out some important facts. First, most of the gains in adult literacy have resulted from the expansion of primary schooling world-wide and not from campaigns, programs and projects exclusively designed for and directed to the adult learner. This indicates that policy makers in most parts of the world have been unwilling to make the required policy choices and resource commitments to adult literacy. They have followed the gradualist approach of

letting primary education do their work. And now there is the disturbing news that the trend of slow but ever-decreasing illiteracy percentages may reverse itself, as the economies of the developing countries plung deeper and deeper into recession, and, consequently, more and more resources are withdrawn from primary education. Indeed, both enrolment and retention of children in schools in the Third World have been on the decline during the 1980s.

Second, the demographic explosion in the Third World has resulted in increased absolute numbers of adult illiterates even as the ratios of illiteracy have gone down. This trend happily will correct itself as the population bulg works itself out of the system.

Third, educational statisticians now seem to think that the estimates and projections used in the table below may have grossly underestimated the magnitudes of illiteracy since these statistics are often based on self-reported data and not on test results obtained from carefully selected samples of adults.

Four, while disparities in literacy acquisition by sex are obvious from the table, some other disparities are not. There are, for instance, serious disparities in literacy acquisition by urban and rural locations, and by age cohorts. Rural illiteracy ratios may often be five times the illiteracy ratios in urban areas of the Third World. Illiteracy ratios get higher and higher as we go up the age ladder.

Five, the most glaring disparities exist relative to the world regions. Even though illiteracy has been rediscovered in

the industrialized countries of North America and Western Europe, these countries are still very well off in relation to the universalization of literacy. The socialist economies have always paid considerable attention to adult literacy. The adult literacy campaign of the USSR of the 19191939 has indeed served as the mother of most national literacy campaigns of the 20th

Illiteracy in the World and Major Regions
in the Age Group 15 and Over, from 1970 to the Year 2000

Unit: millions		1970	1980	1985	1990	2000
World						
Population	MF	2309.8	2879.2	3203.2	3545.7	4241.7
Illiterates	MF	760.2	824.1	857.2	882.1	911.9
Illiteracy Rate (%)	MF	32.9	28.6	26.8	24.9	21.5
	M	27.7	23.3	21.5	19.8	17.0
	F	38.0	33.9	32.0	30.0	26.0
Developed Countries						
Population	MF	784.5	889.7	931.0	967.4	1039.7
Illiteracy Rate (%)	MF	3.7	2.5	2.1	1.8	
	M	3.0	2.0	1.7	1.4	
	F	4.3	3.0	2.6	2.2	
Developing Countries						
Population	MF	1525.3	1989.5	2272.2	2578.3	3201.9
Illiteracy Rate (%)	MF	48.0	40.3	36.9	33.5	28.0
	M	39.6	32.2	29.1	26.3	21.9
	F	56.6	48.5	44.8	40.9	34.3

century (3). Yet the East European socialist countries have a bit higher levels of illiteracy than countries of Western Europe.

The Third World is worse off in adult literacy. Ninety-eight per cent of the illiterate population of the world lives in the Third World.

Issues. All the comments made above are premised on a workable definition of literacy and on the dependability of statistics collected according to such a definition. However, definitional and statistical issues remain. We do, of course, wish to invite serious definitional analysis and refinement of data collection techniques for building dependable data systems on adult literacy. However, we like to warn against exaggerating the problems related to both definitions and data. Definitions of literacy are important, but a universal definition of literacy good across all languages or all nations speaking the same language is impossible. Even a definition developed within a particular context of time, space and language will have to tolerate some ambiguity.

Related with the above is the question of counting literates and illiterates even within the framework of contextual definitions of literacy. Here, again, self-reported data will have to be used and good guesses will have to be made. It would be unfortunate if our obsession with perfect definitions and precise statistics kept us from actions in behalf of literacy. To sum, available statistics, even as imprecise quantities, have a clear qualitative message for us: Illiteracy is a problem. It is a big problem. The problem needs immediate attention.

The ideology of adult literacy: From charity, to radicalism, to pragmatism

Trends. Adult literacy work today is no more an act of mere charity, or of noblesse oblige. It has also outgrown the philosophy of helping people to help themselves or of the professionalization of labor. A new unmistakable ideological trend was set in the Declaration of Persepolis of 1975 (4) that, echoeing Paulo Freire (5), "considered literacy to be not just the process of learning the skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, but a contribution to the liberation of man and of his full development. Thus conceived, literacy creates the conditions for the acquisition of a critical consciousness of the contradictions of society in which man lives..." This is one of the most important and the most influential ideological statements on adult literacy of the last two decades.

The ideology of literacy for liberation has not, of course, abolished all other ideologies. Bhola's political model of literacy promotion (6) identifies three different political cultures (gradualist, reformist, and revolutionary) with differentiated ideologies and consequently three different approaches to literacy promotion (project, program, and campaign).

In the socialist economies of the world, literacy was always an ideological matter. The illiterate, said Lenin, stands outside politics. Literacy was a sine qua non for creating a socialist culture. At the practical level, socialists linked literacy with technology, i.e., with the professionalization of

labor and higher productivity. Political education is taught in groups and then groups are socialized in the new ideology through all structures -- social, political and economic. The overriding theme is to elevate both culture and technology.

In the West as well, the politics of literacy is now universally understood by scholars. Even the practitioners at the intermediate levels of literacy systems are beginning to understand the politics of literacy. Those who claim to be practically oriented and want to do something for fulfilling basic needs of the poor are acquiring a bi-focal vision. They are adding awareness to functionality. The word "empowering" has become a cliche!

In the Third World there is more rhetoric than reality in regard to ideological literacy. While a few popular groups do some small-scale popular literacy projects, government programs always tend to be tame, irrespective of official rhetoric. Ideology is overwhelmed by hunger. Most often it is the ideology of modernization and higher productivity, not of freedom and fairness.

A new trend may, however, be emerging combining freedom with bread. What we see is the emergence of "functional literacy" built upon the concept of a generalized functionality which while teaching critical consciousness also teaches health care, family planning, protection of the environment and productivity, thereby enabling adults to get more out of their fields and work-sheds.

Issues. At the most general level there is the issue of ensuring that literacy for liberation while being pro-people is not necessarily anti-state. Where the state is indeed responsive

to the aspirations of peoples, the question is: How to ensure that critical awareness does not become equated with propaganda in behalf of the government's bureaucratic plans and initiatives?

An important issue remains in relation to the concept of dominant literacy (provided by the state) and ideological literacy (through spontaneous organization of peoples in their own behalf). Some analysts go so far as to suggest that only popular literacy is worth doing and all other literacy is dominant literacy. But that takes out the role of leadership by the agents of the state; and in the Third World countries the state is a very important agent of social change.

There are additional issues: Can awareness be taught by those who themselves lack critical awareness? Can functional literacy help any if outside structures do not change? Will the middle men standing between the development elite and the poorest of the poor ever let benefits flow to those for whom they are intended? Discussion continues to rage.

Scope and substance of literacy policies

Trends. Unesco's program of "Education for All" establishes a clear policy trend encouraging all member nations to develop policies of education for all encompassing, on the one hand, universalization of primary education; and, on the other hand, conducting programs of adult literacy of the size and scope commensurate with the needs. The forthcoming World Conference on Education for All sponsored by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank to be held in Jomtien, Thailand, during March 5-9, 1990 will

advocate that all countries consider the following planning targets by the year 2000:

Primary education:	Each country will strive to ensure that at least 80% of all 14-year old boys and girls attain a common level of learning achievement for primary education, set by the respective national authorities.
Adult education:	Access to basic skills and knowledge for all.
Literacy:	Massive reduction of illiteracy with targets to be set by each country prioritized by age and sex (7).

The Conference agenda recognizes "the universal literacy aspirations for literacy" and links educational policies with disarmament and world peace. There is a special policy focus on the literacy of women, not only for reasons of equity and basic justice but also for the simple pragmatic reasons of the total contexture of effects of women's literacy on intergenerational literacy, fertility, family health, community and society.

Over the last forty years or more, the policy now articulated by UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank has had varied manifestations in different regions and nations. Adult literacy has been a part of socialist policy agenda for a long time. In the West, it has been more recent. Universal primary education was supposed to have eradicated the problem of illiteracy at the root. Industrialized countries refused to believe and then to admit that there were problems of illiteracy in their midst. Policies on adult literacy promotion are recent and even now quite adhocratic.

In the Third World where adult literacy is most needed,

policy initiatives have been absent or not fully commensurate with the needs. For a long time, countries with adult literacy policies could be counted on the fingers of one's hand. Situation is now changing. Unesco's initiative on Education for All has focussed attention on adult education. And since adult education has serious limits without literacy, attention has shifted to policy making in adult literacy. A clear trend is emerging toward policies of adult education with adult literacy. This has also put the role of media in proper perspective. There is policy consensus that media can not carry the whole burden of adult education and development communication. Media often assume some literacy among listeners and viewers and media do depend a lot on the written word. Illiteracy is thus a disadvantage in learning from media. Undoubtedly, literacy has become central to the processes of development, both for democratization and modernization (8).

One can see a disquetening possibility in the otherwise bold initiative of the World Conference on Education for All. Some of the countries may read the documentation on the World Conference as emphasizing primary education but down-playing adult education and literacy. The clearly stated numerical targets for primary education of "at least 80% of all boys and girls" to receive primary education by the year 2000 will most likely be read as normative. On the other hand, qualitative apirations for "access to basic skills and knowledge for all" and relative suggestions in regard to "massive reductions of illiteracy with targets to be set by each country and prioritized by age and sex"

may be read as down-playing adult education and adult literacy. We hope this does not turn out to be the case.

Issues. An all-embracing, and important issue (or challenge) consists in learning to nest adult literacy policies within educational policies and to nest educational policies, in turn, within development policies.

The next most important policy issue may be related to the interfaces to be developed between primary education, adult education and adult literacy within the context of "Education for All." Will primary schooling be primary and out-of-school adult education and literacy be secondary? Will adult education compete with literacy? Or will adult education, at least in developing countries, be construed as adult education with literacy? Will there be an attempt to allocate fixed ratios of resources to each of the three educational initiatives to ensure attention to all three within an overall educatiaonal policy context? These are important issues which may need the attention of the World Conference on Educaiton for All in March 1990.

Theory and research: Professionalization of literacy

Trends. Adult literacy policies have found persuasive justifications because there has been a professionalization of the field of adult literacy. There have been important theoretical and research developments in adult literacy. While some continue to talk of the "dispossession of speech", and "denial of narration" to the people through the diffusion of literacy, there are now clear theoretical understandings findings to the effect

that:

1. all cultures today are print cultures, and that there are no fully autonomous oral cultures left in the world
2. literacy today is assumed by all social structures -- secular and sacred
3. illiteracy today is, by definition, a disadvantage both for individuals and societies
4. literacy may not have generalized cognitive consequences for the individual (the technology of intellect hypothesis may not be as general as first assumed) but literacy is certainly "potential added" to the individual in making transactions with the total environment; and even rudimentary literacy has significant consequences for the new social definitions of individuals
5. literacy brings to the individual liberation from dependence and is necessary for any accumulation of the knowledge capital
6. literacy and development connections hold both at the individual and the collective levels. While literacy is not deterministic, and without help from surrounding structures is not effective, literacy shows iumportant results in aspects within the locus of control of the individual.

Most of these theoretical developments have come from the West. Socialist contributions though many are in no way unique. The Third World has made contributions by being the testing ground of many of these theories and thereby promoted theory development. Substantive theoretical contributions from the

Third World are the dependency theory, the theory of critical consciousness and the Gandhian concept of Nai Talim (new education) rooted in a new philosophy of work.

Issues. The issues in this regard are essentially organized around the knowledge hegemony of the North over the South. Ninety-eight percent of the world's illiterates live in the Third World, but most of the theory and research on literacy comes out of the North, particularly the North-West. Within particular countries, the tension between theory and practice, between the university and the field worker remains.

Mobilization for adult literacy

Trends. There is a general understanding emerging that adult literacy work requires social mobilization. Practitioners, however, seem too often to wait for the self-motivated to come to their doors seeking help to become literate! Socialists had understood long ago that motivations are not spontaneous. Motivations have to be mobilized. The most important contribution to mobilization for social change coming from the socialist countries may be the concept of the mass organization. The mass organization has been widely and effectively used in socialist societies to inform, to persuade and to apply incentives and disincentives in obtaining conformity in thought and action.

In the market economies more is done to sell Pepsi and personalities than to sell literacy. Illiterates are supposed to come to literacy classes self-motivated. A week trend may be emerging, however, in the social marketing of adult literacy.

In the Third World as well mobilizations for literacy are seldom planned, and rarely executed. Presidents and Prime Ministers hesitate to lend their names and personal prestige to the efforts of mobilization for adult literacy. Some Third World countries, among them Ethiopia, and Tanzania have adopted the idea of mass organization from socialist countries and used it to mobilize for literacy work. During the Independence movement in India, Mahatama Gandhi used face-to-face people´s channels to spread political messages. The Islamic Revolution in Iran during our times used similar channels. However, these modes of mobilization have not been transferred to adult literacy promotion.

Issues. Issues of social mobilization arise within a set of questions such as: What is the relationship between felt needs and fashioned needs? Is it not the role of leadership to fashion new needs and to teach new motivations? Is it not a misunderstanding of the process of social change to depend on the already motivated individual alone?

To continue: When does fashioning of new needs become manipulation and when does mobilization become coercion? Where does the literacy worker as mobilizer of motivations stop so as not to impinge upon personal freedoms and individual privacies? What should be the combination in messages for mobilization of the educational that reasons, and the emotive that seeks to suspend judgment?

Mobilization does not merely seek participation in literacy programs. It also seeks to mobilize people´s resources. An important issue is involved here. Is it fair to take even

little from those who already have so very little? When does the sacred cow of voluntarism become explcitation of the voluntary literacy teacher doomed to live in the rural areas without alternatives, social or economic?

Institutions for the delivery of adult literacy

Trends. There has been considerable innovation in institution-building and organization of literacy work and considerable borrowing and adaptation across cultures and countries. The opposite tendencies of centralization and decentralization are resolving into "democratic centralism" wherein national direction of missions is combined with local initiative and implementation. A realistic division of labor between the government and non-governmental agencies is emerging.

Governments are placing literacy sometimes in the ministries of education (as literacy is seen as second chance formal education), sometimes in the ministries of culture (as literacy is seen as a generalized cultural enrichment), and at other times in the ministries of labor or social welfare (as literacy is seen as reducing a deficit among the disadvantaged). Few countries have organizational structures for the planning and delivery of adult literacy going down through provinces to districts and localities. At the field level, literacy organization is adhocratic and depends on voluntary work.

Combining the teaching of literacy code and economic function through coordination of two ministries or departments has often failed. A trend may be emerging involving the teaching of generalized functional literacy in an initial stage by the

ministry of education, and then handing over a well-formed group to an extension ministry that can effectively teach advanced functional skills.

Non-governmental organizations are taking more and more interest in literacy. There is also the tendency for NGO´s to join regional and national associations, as big international NGO´s are coming on the horizon. Unfortunately, too many NGO´s are receiving their funding from governments and are thereby losing some the traditional freedoms associated with NGO´s.

Different approaches to the delivery of literacy continue at the same time. There are large-scale national campaigns and programs, typically run by governments. There are small-scale literacy programs and projects, typically run by non-governmental agencies. After some unfounded bias against campaigns, people are beginning to realize the mobilizational merits of campaigns as also the fact that to do the job of eradicating illiteracy within a realistic time frame campaigns may be a necessity.

The organization of literacy at the field level has at least three modes: an instructor teaching a class; each one teach one; and teaching a whole family, treating illiteracy as an intergenerational phenomenon.

An understanding may also be emerging that the organization for literacy can become the focus for general community organization for all other development work. There are examples from Zimbabwe that well functioning income generation projects collapsed when the "root organization" of the literacy class died. In political cultures where community organization

may be suspect in the eyes of the state, literacy work may serve as the surrogate for community organization.

Issues. An important organizational issue is this: How to make adult literacy a part of the institutional mission of all extension agencies? The dilemma is that when everyone is responsible, no one is responsible; and when one is responsible, one alone is responsible. How can inter-agency coordination be achieved and made to function on a day to day basis? The same issue appears in the need for literacy work to be coordinated with media institutions.

The role of NGO's in literacy versus the state remains an important issue. The division of leadership and labor remains a problem. The problem is made more complex by the fact that NGO's in the Third World are often unable to collect local funds and find themselves seeking funds from the state. The issue then is: How to ensure that nongovernmental agencies are not coopted by the funding agencies and thereby lose their freedom?

Another issue: Can we combine the features of the campaign, the program and the project in our literacy initiatives to get the best of all worlds -- the enthusiasm of the campaign, the steadiness of the institutionalized program, and the local relevance of the small project? Also connected with the above is the issue of voluntarism and the conception of the role of the field worker as cadre versus functionary. Which one do we want?

Curricula, constituencies, methods and materials of adult literacy

Trends. An understanding has developed of the

relationship between the ideology and the technology of literacy. Curriculum choices are, of course, ideological: to teach the exercise of freedom or production of food? to empower or teach how to cope? There is a clear trend to focus more on more on the content of literacy materials -- primers, and followup books. As was discussed in an earlier section, either/or choices are being avoided in favour of "generalized functionality" that seeks to enable the new literate to make effective transactions with the total cultural and technological environemnt. That does not mean, however, that this trend is universal. In the West workplace literacy is being enthusiastically promoted. Computer based literacy is another trend in countries where computers are becoming part of the electronic gadgetry of middle-class homes.

The disadvantaged, the poorest of the poor, refugees, migrants and immigrants and ethnic minorities have become constituencies of special concern to literacy workers and special curricula are being developed for them. Women are receiving special attention. It is also being understood that literacy curricula for women -- and men -- will have to defreeze the current internalization, institutionalization and sanctification-ritualization of the subordinate status of women prevalent in all cultures without exception; and then move and refreeze newly invented definitions of self-concepts, mutualality in male-female relationships, gender-free division of labor, affirmative institutional norms and patterns and renewed cultural traditions (9).

Concern with the methodology of teaching literacy used to be obsessive. The understanding is now emerging that methodology may be marginal to the success of literacy promotion. Context

and commitment may be more important. Alphabetical methods have been rejected in favor of holistic methods. The sight words taught in primers or thematic charts are ideologically hot such as "hunger" and "poverty"!

Issues. An important issue is: How much of the curriculum should be determined locally and how much of it globally? Shouldn't there be a dialectic between community needs and national development needs? How far should the adult literacy worker go in challenging traditions that have clearly become dysfunctional?

In the teaching of generalized functionality there is the issue of integration of literacy with skills training and with conscientization. What should be the point of beginning: conscientization, teaching of functional skills and income generation projects, or the teaching of literacy? The answer, of course, is simple: "It depends!" Literacy should be central because it will make conscientization and functionality both more potent, but it will depend on particular context how the three are woven together in the fabric of the curriculum.

Another issue: Should conscientization, functionality and literacy all be integrated in print, embedded in the instructional materials or could integration be complemented through actions outside the materials, achieved through other means? It seems that trying to achieve full integration through materials alone may be an impossible and an unnecessary ideal. Functional literacy primers and materials might as well stay at the level of introducing relevant sight words and the ideas they represent.

Speaking out the unspoken may be enough. Integration between literacy and function can and should be achieved from the fact of the same group participating in the literacy class as well as an income generating project and community organization. Integration would emerge also from the literacy teacher, the community activist, the leader of the income generating project talking to each other, talking the same language, and sharing common purposes.

The language of literacy remains an issue. Literacy workers find themselves carrying out heated discussions about choices between the mother tongue, a lingua franca, a national language and an international language of literacy. Illiterates in Botswana, irrespectively of their mother tongue, want to learn literacy in Setswana because that is the language of politics and economy in the country. In Nepal, illiterates want to learn literacy in the national language and not in their dialect. New literates in Zimbabwe after learning literacy in Shona or Ndebele want to learn English literacy. In Malawi, the President has issued a directive that the literacy program teach literacy in English to his favorite Mbumba, a women's group active in development work at community levels.

Training and recruitment of adult literacy functionaries

Trends. There may be a problem at the very top: the need for "the education of the literacy educators." Sometimes policy makers themselves seem to have less than full understanding of the centrality of adult literacy in the development processes, resulting in a crisis of conviction. Such policy makers and

planners are obviously unable to argue for the allocation of resources to literacy promotion. An important role is being played in the education of the literacy educators by a variety of multilateral and bilateral donor agencies who specialize in promoting discussion and dialog and sponsoring professional networks.

Overall adult literacy work is being professionalized all over the world. New professional institutions are being established and personnel at all the various levels are being trained.

In the West, training for adult education has been concentrated in the universities. However, few of these university centers offer courses in adult literacy. In the socialist countries adult education has received attention in specialized institutions outside the universities. Here again much less attention has been paid to adult literacy training per se.

Third World countries seem to have done quite well in training of middle level personnel in adult literacy programs. Several universities in Africa and Asia have college programs for training of teachers that include adult eduaticn and literacy work as part of the curriculum. There are several centers, institutions within the development sector that train required personnel for literacy programs. There are institutions to train field level workers as well. In the methdology of training, a dialectic is emerging between "training by objective" and "training by participation."

Issues. The question of training gets linked with the issue of credentialing. Do only the credentialled have "The right to teach." Is the compulsion with training, inhibiting

contribution to adult literacy work by the committed and competent but not credentialled? The issue of "red versus expert" appears and reappears in many garbs. What should be the combination between technical training and ideological training, between competence and commitment in our training programs?

An important issue relates to how to ensure that training inputs are made in the functionary at the front line? Since literacy teachers are often volunteers, governements are reluctant to make important training inputs in them, especially when training of volunteers results in higher turnover. There is a related issue that may indeed be prior to the issue of making training inputs into the front-line functionary. The issue is where do we get a front-line functionary, often a volunteer, often paid as little as 2 dollars a month, of the quality to act as a first-rate, full-time professional who will be able to integrate awareness, functionality, and literacy in his or her teaching of an adult class.

For manpower at the middle and higher levels of the policy making and programming systems, training is available only in advanced countries such as in England, Canada, United States and Scandanavia. Even at its best, such training does not relate fully well to the realities back home and is unable to be respcsive to the needs of trainees.

The class bias of adult literacy functionaries can also be a serious issue. There may be overall less sympathy for adult education and adult literacy within the policy making cultures and within systems of implementation because of the class bias of

those who are in control of making policy, and programming decisions.

Evaluation in adult literacy

Trends. Until the 1960s, not much was said about evaluation of adult literacy. Program evaluation was almost unknown, and literacy workers resisted the idea of subjecting adult learners to reading and writing tests and thereby attacking their dignity.

With the current competition for scarce resources, literacy workers have been forced to show impact of their programs and demonstrate that literacy shows acceptable levels of returns on investment. The demands for evaluation of impact and results today is irrestible.

Two trends are visible. More and more literacy campaigns, programs and projects are developing elaborate pencil and paper Management Information Systems (MIS's). They are also learning to use these MIS's in policy development, program planning, and day-to-day monitoring of their initiatives.

More and more impact evaluations are being conducted. Here, an important methodological trend needs to be taken note of: impact studies are making use of both quantitative survey data and qualitative ethnographic data. The demand for the so-called scientific and objective data is being put in perspective.

Issues. The most important issue in literacy evaluation perhaps is at the level of allocation of resources between implementation and evaluation of programs. Donors particularly can sometimes distort priorities. They can spend relatively

generously on evaluation and relatively less on programs in trying to learn systematically from experience.

There is also the question of evaluands, those who are being evaluated. Some can be subjected to evaluation against their will. Others can be left out of the evaluation projects thereby being denied allocation of resources to their communities because they are not part of the experimental design.

Carrying out testing of adults has not been universally accepted and remains an issue. While the need for collecting MIS data has been accepted more and more, the issue of a balance between numbers and meanings remains.

A variety of issues dealing with the utilization of results remain. Who controls the information and what uses are made of it? Finally, there is the question of criteria. What impact should be looked into and what standards of satisfaction should prevail? For instance, too many evaluations seem to be looking in the wrong place, looking for gains in productivity in the formal sector and almost completely missing out on the informal sector within the locus of control of the new literate.

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